

NBC NIGHTLY NEWS
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FILE ONLY

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Pelton Spy Case

BROKAW: At the Baltimore trial of Ronald Pelton, charged with spying for the Soviet Union, the prosecution today said that he passed some of this country's most sensitive to the Russians because he was broke.

And as NBC's James Polk reports now, Pelton reportedly said that the Soviets got the better deal.

JAMES POLK: An FBI agent testified that Pelton admitted, "The Soviets got more out of me than I wanted to give up." The FBI man said Pelton gave the Russians information from a top secret study Pelton had written describing how the National Security Agency intercepts as many as 60 types of radio and signal traffic inside the Soviet Union.

The prosecution displayed only cover page and one other page to the jury, with all the code names and details taken out.

The FBI agent testified Pelton said, "They were interested in everything in the document." But Pelton would not discuss any specifics with the FBI, saying that might hang him.

The jury heard testimony Pelton had admitted going to the Soviet Embassy in 1980 and showing the Russians, on a map, one place where the NSA was spying on them. The FBI witness quoted Pelton as saying walking into the Soviet Embassy was the biggest mistake of his life. "But when you're broke and desperate and your family can barely survive, you do crazy things."

Pelton was worried when the FBI asked him to come back for more questioning the night he was arrested. This was overheard on an FBI microphone hidden in his girlfriend's apartment.

RONALD PELTON: [Unintelligible]

POLK: The prosecution is using Pelton's own words to the FBI as the most damaging evidence against him.

The trial is moving so fast, the case should go to the jury by the middle of next week.